

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Sex

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to help slow the spread of the disease caused by the novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) in Los Angeles County. Public Health would like to provide you with some general information about COVID-19, as well as specific measures you should take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection. All Los Angeles County residents should stay home and minimize contact with others to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

But can you have sex?

Sex is a normal human activity, and a way to have fun without leaving your home. However, it is important that during this pandemic you practice safer sex in new ways. Here are some tips for how to enjoy sex and to avoid spreading COVID-19.

1. Know how COVID-19 spreads.

- **You can get COVID-19 from a person who has it.**
 - The virus can spread to people who are within about 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 when that person coughs or sneezes.
 - The virus can spread through direct contact with their saliva or mucus.
 - People can spread the virus two days (48 hours) before they feel any symptoms.
- **We still have a lot to learn about COVID-19 and sex.**
 - COVID-19 has been found in feces of people who are infected with the virus.
 - COVID-19 has not yet been found in semen or vaginal fluid.
 - We know that other coronaviruses do not easily spread through sex.

2. Have sex with people close to you.

- **You are your safest sex partner.** Masturbation will not spread COVID-19, especially if you wash your hands (and any sex toys) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after sex.
- **The next safest partner is someone you live with.** Having close contact — including sex — with only a small circle of people helps prevent spreading COVID-19.
- **You should avoid close contact — including sex — with anyone outside your household.** If you do have sex with others, have as few partners as possible.
- **If you usually meet your sex partners online or make a living by having sex,** take a break from in-person dates. Video dates, sexting or chat rooms are safer options for you.

3. Take care during sex.

- **Kissing can easily pass COVID-19.** Avoid kissing anyone who is not part of your small circle of close contacts.
- **Rimming (mouth on anus) might spread COVID-19.** Virus in feces may enter your mouth.
- **Condoms and dental dams can reduce contact with saliva or feces,** especially during oral or anal sex.
- **Washing up before and after sex is more important than ever.** Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

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- Wash sex toys with soap and warm water.
- Disinfect keyboards and touch screens that you share with others (for video chat, for watching pornography or for anything else).

4. Skip sex if you or your partner are not feeling well.

- **If you or a partner may have COVID-19**, avoid sex and especially kissing.
- **If you start to feel unwell**, you may be about to develop symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If this occurs be sure to stay home and isolate yourself for at least 3 days (72 hours) after recovery, which means your fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medications and there is improvement in your respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath), **AND** at least 7 days have passed *since your symptoms first appeared*.
- Be sure to Tell all of your close contacts that *they need to be in quarantine for 14 days after their last contact with you*. Close contacts include all household members, any intimate contacts, and all individuals who were *within 6 feet of you for more than 10 minutes, starting 48 hours before your symptoms began until your isolation period ends*. In addition, anyone who had contact with your body fluids and/or secretions (such as were coughed on/sneezed on, shared utensils or saliva or provided care to you without wearing protective equipment) needs to be in quarantine.
- **If you or your partner has a medical condition that can lead to more severe COVID-19**, you may also want to skip sex.
 - Medical conditions include lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system (for example, having unsuppressed HIV and a low CD4 count).

5. Prevent HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unplanned pregnancy.

- **Condoms:** Condoms help prevent HIV and other STIs. For information on how to order free condoms, please visit lacondom.com/order-condoms.
- **PrEP and PEP:** Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis both help prevent HIV. For more information about PrEP and PEP, visit getprepla.com.
- **HIV and STD Testing:** Getting tested for HIV and other STDs is an important way to protect your health. To find a place that offers HIV and STD testing near you, please visit gettested.cdc.gov.
- **HIV Care:** For people who are living with HIV, it is important to be in care. For information about HIV care, and maintaining an undetectable viral load, please visit getprotectedla.com/uu/get-hiv-treatment
- **Birth Control:** Make sure you have an effective form of birth control for the coming weeks. Visit https://www.bedsider.org/where_to_get_it to find low and no cost birth control options near you.

For more information about COVID-19 in Los Angeles County, visit publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus.

Acknowledgments: “Sex and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)”, The NYC Health Department, March 21, 2020